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UNCLAS HANOI 002055

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND PRM, BANGKOK FOR REFUGEE
COORDINATOR, GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNHCR TO VISIT GIA LAI AGAIN, INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE
MICRO-PROJECTS

Reftel: State 148146

1. (SBU) Summary: UNHCR will send a team of three representatives to Gia Lai Province August 22-26 to look into the status of ethnic minority returnees. The UNHCR team will also investigate possible Tripartite MOU-mandated micro-projects, for which UNHCR recently received USD 130,000 from the USG. End Summary.

2. (SBU) UNHCR Chief of Mission Vu Anh Son told Pol/C August 11 that he, UNHCR Regional Representative Hasim Utkan and Assistant Regional Representative for Operations Bernard Quah will pay a monitoring visit to Gia Lai Province August 22-26. The UNHCR team hopes to visit Duc Co District, in which 56 of the 94 recent returnees reside. Krong Pa District, the birthplace of Montagnard Foundation head Kok Ksor, is another possible destination. The team will also investigate possible micro-projects, which UNHCR committed itself to seek funding for under the Vietnam-Cambodia-UNHCR Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding. Son related that he had just learned from Geneva that the USG had approved USD 130,000 for UNHCR projects in the Central Highlands; using the funds to build a school (or a number of schools) is one possible option, he said.

3. (SBU) Son said that the attitude of his MFA and Ministry of Public Security counterparts has so far been positive, and that he merely needs to "inform" rather than "seek permission" to travel to the Central Highlands. Concerned that UNHCR's frequent visits may be a burden to local authorities, Son said that UNHCR is prepared to provide "around" USD 10,000 to help pay for transportation and other costs. Son also indicated that UNHCR's next trip may be in October.

4. (SBU) Son reported that the number of "refuseniks" in Phnom Penh (those ethnic minority Vietnamese who are eligible for but do not accept resettlement) has dropped to 19 persons, from a high of close to 350 persons. However, the GVN still complains that the speed of moving out those who have accepted resettlement is "too slow," Son said.

5. (SBU) Comment: Per reftel, we will meet in coming days with our colleagues from like-minded embassies to inform them of our plans to visit the Central Highlands in early September and encourage them to do the same. COM Son was pleased when informed that the Embassy and ConGen HCMC planned to send a team to Gia Lai September 6-9 and indicated he would do his best to encourage other donor nation representatives to follow suit. End Comment.

MARINE